



Sarah Havdala
Policy Analyst

Jonah Brody
Policy Analyst

Iran Protests Update: January 17-20, 2026

On December 28, 2025, protests against the Iranian regime erupted across Iran in response to the country's economic collapse. JINSA will release weekly updates covering the demonstrations as long as they continue. The update below reflects information as of January 20, 2026, at 10:30 am ET.

In addition to the update, JINSA has published a [timeline](#) highlighting the protests in Iran and the Trump administration's response to the regime's violent retaliation.

Overview

The Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) has confirmed the deaths of at least [4,029](#) individuals during the ongoing protests while [9,049](#) other alleged killings are under review. However, *Iran International* has reported that at least [12,000](#) have been killed, with many of those deaths reported as the country plunged into a nationwide internet outage on January 8 and 9. HRANA also reported that over [26,015](#) others have been detained as of January 20.

Protests

- HRANA [reported](#) that, as of January 20, 625 protests have occurred across 188 cities.
- On January 20, *Iran International* [received](#) a video from the funeral of slain protester Alireza Rahimi in which attendees chanted, “this year is the year of blood; [Iranian Supreme Leader Ali] Khamenei will be toppled” and “neither Gaza nor Lebanon, my life for Iran.”
- On January 19, *Iran International* [published](#) a video from the funeral of slain protester Ali Khaledi in which attendees in Lordegan carried a pre-Islamic Revolution flag and chanted “death to Khamenei” and “this is the final battle, [exiled Iranian Crown Prince Reza] Pahlavi will return.”
- On January 18, Iranian state television was reportedly [hacked](#), briefly airing opposition messages and a speech by Crown Prince Pahlavi.
- Overnight on January 17 and 18, protesters reportedly [gathered](#) in Tehran, and chanted “death to the dictator” and “death to Khamenei.”
 - » On the same night, “rebellious youth” reportedly [clashed](#) with security forces in Khoy, Eslamshar, Aineh, Qalkhani, and Kermanshah City.

Regime Retaliation

- On January 19, *The Guardian* [reported](#) that Iranian authorities sexually assaulted two detained protesters in Kermanshah, including a 16-year-old.

- On January 19, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence [arrested](#) 192 people in Razavi Khorosan province for their alleged involvement in recent protests.
- On January 19, the Iranian government [suspended](#) the *Ham-Mihan* reformist newspaper following its coverage of the protests.
- On January 19, Iran's national police chief, Ahmad-Reza Radan, [ordered](#) protesters to surrender to authorities within three days, warning that those who fail to do so will face the full extent of the law.
- On January 18, *The Sunday Times* [reported](#) that 16,500 protesters were killed and 330,000 others were injured during the nationwide demonstrations.
- On January 17, former British parliament member Bill Rammell [alleged](#) that Iranian authorities used chemical weapons to combat protesters.
 - » While awaiting verification for Rammell's claims, *Iran International* [published](#) a video from January 8 of Iranian security forces wearing hazmat suits and masks in Sabzevar, their vehicle displaying a hazardous materials symbol.
- On January 16, Norway-based Hengaw Organization for Human Rights [reported](#) that detained Kurdish protester Soran Feyzizadeh died after authorities subjected him to severe torture in custody.

Regime Responses

- On January 20, Iran's national security parliamentary commission [announced](#) that an attack on Khamenei would prompt "a declaration of war with the entire Islamic world."
 - » The announcement came after Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian [posted](#) to X on January 18, writing that an attack on Khamenei "is tantamount to all-out war against the Iranian nation."
- On January 19, Iranian Vice President for Science Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy Hossein Afshin [announced](#) that Iran's internet will return to normal by the end of the week.
- On January 18, Iran's judiciary spokesperson Asghar Jahangir [argued](#) that several protesters are guilty of committing "mohareb" (waging war against God) and would receive the "severest punishment" for their participation in the recent demonstrations.
 - » Jahangir's threats to execute protesters [contradicts](#) Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's statement in which he claimed that "there is no plan" to hang protesters.
- On January 17, Khamenei [stated](#) that Iran's government views President Donald Trump as "a criminal for the casualties, damages, and slander he inflicted on the Iranian nation."
 - » Khamenei also [claimed](#) that the recent protests were "an American plot, and the United States' goal is to devour Iran."
- On January 16, Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei [declared](#) that Iran must carry out "timely and undelayed" punishments for protesters.

U.S. Responses

- On January 17, during an interview with *Politico*, Trump [stated](#) that "it's time to look for new leadership in Iran."

International Responses

- On January 19, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [told](#) the Knesset that Israel would respond to any Iranian attack with “strength that Iran hasn’t yet known.”
- Over the weekend, protests continued worldwide in support of the Iranian people, with demonstrations in cities including [New York](#); [Los Angeles](#); [London](#); [Seoul](#); [Toronto](#); [Tokyo](#); [Paris](#); [Vienna](#); [Berlin](#); and outside the European Parliament in [Strasbourg](#).

JINSA's Iran Protests Timeline

